avoids ailments which his power cannot cure, such as a broken leg. The shaman generally sets himself into a state of trance, in which he projects his soul into the spirit realm and there discovers the secret cause of some human disorder, cattle plague, or whatever problem faces him. The Kazakh shaman, called bagsha, belongs to a hereditary profession. The patrilineal organization of Kazakh society is reflected in this folk religion: "The profession of bagsha is transmitted usually from father to son; this inheritance pattern bears the name of bagshylyk."[1]

This form of shamanism is widespread among the Turks and the Mongols, where the former have not been absorbed into the world of Islam, or the latter into the world of Buddhism. Kazakh shamanism is connected most intimately with the social organization of the people. The practice of animal sacrifices conducted by the shaman in the case of severe or dangerous disease, the shaman's use of the drum or tambourine (Kazakh dabyl) in his ceremonies, the passing of a shaman's spirits to his son when the shaman dies, are all part of the fabric of Turko-Mongol religion and society, just as is the cult of ancestors. However, the Kazakhs have not lived in a vacuum sealed off from the Moslem world, for they have formed part of ancient empires thoroughly Islamic in faith; the empire of Tamerlane, to which the ancestors of the Kazakhs belonged in the 14th and 15th centuries, was a Moslem empire. The bagsha's spirits are known among the Kazakhs as djinns, a Moslem term for spirits; the bagsha frequently invokes Allah, and the Arabic devil, Shaitan, is accursed and admonished.[2]

Elements of Islam have thus slipped into the folk religion of the Kazakhs, a process over which the Russians have had no control; Tsarist recognition of Islam was not needed to introduce these elements among the Kazakhs.

For an exact appraisal of the role of Islam among the Kazakhs, another ancient practice must be examined. The Kazakhs have traditionally believed in and made pilgrimages to holy places. In Central Asia one finds a vast number of such places, tombs of saints or of other holy men. These tombs, called mazar by the Kazakhs and Kirgiz, stand alone or together with several others within an earthen enclosure which forms a sacred ossuary.[3] Among devout Moslems visits to these places can even replace the pilgrimage to Mecca.

In recent years the Soviet regime has been concerned about this practice. The Party Committee of the Pavlodar Region in May 1952 called for strengthening of the natural sciences and of antireligious propaganda, with special reference to a mazar in the Bayan-Aul District, which has existed for many years. The Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan was instructed to put an end to the legends regarding the saint in the tomb. The Academy formed a committee to visit the sepulchre and examine the matter, but the committee limited itself to inscribing certain remarks in the visitor's book beside the tomb. It was denounced by the Party for its lack of effort.[4]

[1] Castagne (27), 1930, pp. 67-73.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 67-73.
[3] Castagne (29), 1951, pp. 46-50.
[4] *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 24 May 52.